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THE BEGINNING AND END OF MAN

BY

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ND END OF MAN

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PREFACE

THE following considerations formed the substance of a course of sermons delivered at Our Lady of Victories, Kensington, in October, 1920, shortly after the pronouncements of an Anglican Canon on the Fall had aroused some interest in the newspapers. The text of the sermons has been slightly abbreviated, but no further effort has been made to edit them except in so far as the written word must necessarily differ from the spoken. The writer claims no specialist knowledge on any branch of natural science, nor any originality for his views ; he has simply attempted to turn the light of common sense on a subject which only calls for such treatment because so many of us are still content to be hypnotised by catchwords.

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THE BEGINNING AND END OF MAN

I

MAN'S PLACE IN CREATION

THE Theory of Evolution has its own evolution through more than a century of scientific controversy; its own variations, now elicited by the need of adaptation to a changing environment in philosophical thought, in religious and even political history, now consisting of imperceptible modifications immanent in the process; and through it all runs, like a principle of natural selection, the iron law of inductive experiment, testing and winnowing the theories of yesterday, and relegating what it has discarded to the fossil-museum of the past. The whole theory is only a theory still. But so far as concerns the general issue between the rival views of creative evolution and of special creation, of types fixed for all time and types merging into fresh types, it is enough to say that, whatever corroboration it may receive, the evolution-theory neither detracts in any way from the sense of grandeur with which God's

creative work must affect all thoughtful minds, nor promises to give any answer to the age-long " Why " that underlies all our modern cries of " How."

But when we come to the position of Man in this baffling system of Creation, should we not expect that biological science, in proportion as its guesses arrive nearer at the truth of things, would illustrate in fresh lights the profound distinction there is between Man and beast, the inherent fitness of Man to lord it over the Universe that has been made, it would seem, for his pleasure ? We all know that biological science does nothing of the sort. On the contrary, it has given us an undignified race of animals, not indeed as our ancestors—that is a misstatement—but as a sort of poor relations with a common ancestry in the background. And, while it admits that Man is the nobler, because from the biological point of view the more complicated, type, and that the specific differences between the lowest type of humanity and the highest beast are significantly large, it is not prepared on that account to spare our feelings. There may have been a series of animal types representing a slow gradation between ape and man, which have perished, according to the Darwinian law, only because their mixed characteristics did not qualify them to survive—types, you may suppose, that had just not enough tail to clamber up a tree when attacked, just not enough brain to dig themselves in behind it. Man's title to live would

thus, after all, be little better than an accident. Or, on the Lamarckian view, this noble and complex structure, the human body, may have only been called into existence, through generations of struggle, by an automatic response to the exigencies of our environment. And, whatever more modern reconciliation or rehandling of these views be the dominant hypothesis, it is at least clear that on the evolution theory Man's physical structure is not the sudden miracle of intrusion upon Nature that our ancestors have deemed it ; the human race has made good only on the same terms as the other dominating species, and by weapons analogous to theirs ; and, if Man has become Lord of Creation, it would seem that he has won his position as the optimists say Britain won her Empire—only in a fit of absent-mindedness. We cannot even say that it was the human intellect, as such, which secured the triumph. Rather, it may have been an instinctive movement which called forth the first complications of our psychology, even the first elements of our civilisation—a movement as instinctive as that which turned the beaver into an architect and the hunted stag into a strategist.

If it can be proved, so far as such matters are capable of proof, that Man's early development is thus parallel with that of the brute beasts, is there anything left to us in virtue of which we can call Man the master—not merely the highest product, not merely *de facto* the tyrant, but by God-given right the true Lord

and Master of Creation? There is. Run "instinct" for all it is worth; show how Man's delicate sensibility in a thousand directions is but the hypertrophy of such instinct; collect whatever instances you will of inherited tendencies, of herd-psychology, and the rest of it —you still come up against a specific difference between man and brute which eludes all materialist explanation: I mean the reflective reason. When your attention, instead of being directed towards some object outside yourself is directed towards yourself as thinking or towards your own thinking process, that is the work of the intellect, that is Man's special prerogative. When Adam awoke in the garden, we dare not guess what monstrous forms of animal life, what wealth of vegetation our world has forgotten, his eye may have lighted upon. But we do know what was his strangest adventure, because it was an adventure he shared with none of his fellow-tenants in Paradise. His strangest adventure was when he met himself.

Here at least, wherever else you trace continuity, discontinuity begins. The difference between dead matter and living, the difference between unconscious life and life that is sensitive, are not more absolute than the difference between the living thing that can feel and the living thing that can reflect upon its feelings. The phenomenon of the intellect, considered in itself, is not subject to any material laws or susceptible of any material explanation. As a

mere matter of psychological analysis this phenomenon, whatever we make of it, is an intrusion upon the brute creation, a sudden epiphany of the immaterial world within the material horizon. Man is the object of his own thought, and in the direction of that act he borrows nothing whatever from his material surroundings. There you have the casket in which the secret of Man's identity is locked up, beyond the reach of all biological speculation.

And it is because the impressions Man receives through his senses are not simply isolated impressions that die and pass, are not simply stored up by a pigeon-hole system of unconscious association, but related and digested in his thought by the work of the independent, organising intellect, that Man is master of Creation still. He alone is the spectator of all time ; him alone the music of the spheres has for audience. The buffets of experience from without are no longer mere chisel-blows that blindly fashion the evolution of the type ; they are transmuted into terms of spiritual experience, and become part of the individual history, with its loves and hates, its hopes and despairs, its outlook upon eternity. The same intellectual quality which is philosophic proof that man's spirit is immaterial, is at the same time the index of man's place in the scale of being. He alone, of things visible, is related to the Universe as self-conscious subject to object ; but for him, the panorama of Creation would,

for its own tenants, be like a cinema played at St. Dunstan's Home for the Blind.

Is Man a development of the beast ? Why, certainly. Did you not know that you were a brute once ? That when your bodily frame first came into existence, you had no right to be thought higher in the scale of creation, more precious in the sight of God, than the unborn young of an animal ? We did not need Weismann to tell us that one acquired characteristic cannot be inherited, the characteristic of being a rational creature. We knew that God first formed Man of the slime of the earth—of one kindred with the beasts that perish, and only afterwards, only when God breathed into his face the breath of life, did he become a living soul. And if it should prove that our bodies, this slime we were formed from, is part of a coherent system of gradual biological evolution, we are still, as intellectual creatures, the *enfant terrible* of Natural History, a cuckoo's egg in the nest of bewildered Creation.

Man is the pivotal creature ; the spiritual and the material have their *liaison* in him. No discovery of science can abase Man's dignity, so as his mind rests in that truth, and his will in that high ambition.

II

THE WILL

It must be obvious to anybody that a man's actions are in great part determined for him by conditions for which he is not then and there to blame ; sometimes, for which he is not to blame at all. Suppose a man who is born of an unhealthy stock, so that he has a morbid strain in his very blood ; suppose him brought up in a home and among companions whose influence over him is all evil ; suppose that by a long course of vicious living he has fallen into fixed habits of self-indulgence. When that man tosses off, with already trembling fingers, the last glass of drink that nerves him to go out and commit a murder, can we really call his action free ? Does it really differ in kind from the instinctive fury with which the madman turns against his captors, or the lion falls upon its prey ?

The answer to that is a blinding, overpowering conviction of the human conscience. We believe the actions of the lower animals to be determined for them, wholly and completely, by instinct and by training and by circumstance, even when they seem most faithfully to parody

the deliberate decisions of Man. Sir William Watson, for example, describes a collie-dog out for a walk with his master :

> " Shall we take
> This path or that ? It matters not a straw ;
> But just a moment unresolved we stand,
> And all his personality, from ears
> To tip of tail, is interrogative ;
> And when, from pure indifference, we decide,
> How he vociferates ! How he bounds ahead !
> With what enthusiasm he ratifies,
> Applauds, acclaims our choice 'twixt right and left,
> As though some hoary problem, over which
> The world had puckered immemorial brows,
> Were solved at last, and all life launched anew ! "

We know, most of us, those mannerisms of the brute, and yet we can see through them and laugh at them. But when we consider the actions of Man, we think, we talk, we behave—even in the most solemn circumstances, when life and death depend upon our behaviour—as if Man had a will, and must be held responsible for what he does.

I do not say that whenever a man acts freely he is conscious at the moment of free action. On the contrary, it generally feels at the moment as if the motive which induces us to act as we do, rightly or wrongly, were a tyrannous influence from which we cannot escape. But when the action is complete, whether it is our own or that of another, we do get the sense that, if the agent had wished, he could have acted differently—" I oughtn't to have said

that," " He had no right to behave as he did." That means that the action was not determined but free, and we testify to our belief in the responsibility of the human agent whenever we think of reward, or of punishment. It is fatal to be misled into explaining away the concepts you find in your experience. " After all," people say, " what do we mean by a reward ? Isn't it simply a bribe to make people do the same again, just what we do when we give a dog a biscuit to make it do a trick ? And a punishment," they say, " isn't it simply a threat to prevent people doing the same thing again, just what we do when we hang up dead moles on a barn door, to teach the other moles not to come rooting about our property ? " That isn't true. We bribe animals, we threaten animals, but it is only men that we punish, and only men that we reward.

I am a schoolmaster. Supposing there are three boys in my form who don't know their lesson. One of them says he really worked his hardest, but couldn't make head nor tail of it ; and I'm inclined to believe him. The second forgot, simply forgot, that any lesson had been set. The third, it is clear, has simply been slacking. Well, it may be that in the interests of discipline I make them all write out the English of the lesson three times. But in the case of the first I am simply doing it for his education, so as to impress on his memory what he has failed to impress on it for himself : in the case of the second, I am simply correcting

him ; I don't blame him for his forgetfulness, but I'm going to give him a lesson which will make him less forgetful in future. It is with the third, and only with the third—the boy who could have done better than he did—that my action can be properly described as punishment.

But of course your modern psychologist will think that all this is a very superficial analysis. " Are you quite sure," he says, " that you've diagnosed your feelings rightly ? In the last few years we've come to know much more about the curious little kinks and twists which are to be found in the make-up even of a sane, ordinary mind. Sometimes we can explain these things :—a shock, for example, experienced in boyhood, may make a man nervous about fire or afraid of the dark or something of that kind ; the impression left by the experience has lingered on in his subconsciousness long after, it may be, the actual memory of the incident has passed from him. Since our minds are so curiously constructed, may it not be that the conscience you tell us of is, after all, one of these illusions ? That the scoldings and the whackings and the standings in the corner which have been inflicted on us when we were young have produced in us the illusion that we are responsible for our faults, when really our actions were all determined by heredity, by environment, by instinctive movements ? After all, you priests (they tell us) come across plenty of scrupulous people who think some action of

theirs was voluntary when in reality it's quite plain that it wasn't. If we can make such mistakes once, why not always ? If we are sometimes wrong in thinking that we acted freely, isn't it possible that we are always wrong ? "

The answer to that is, No. The human mind cannot simply invent ; cannot think without having the material for its thought supplied to it by experience. And if the doctrine of determinism is true, and there has been no such thing in all human history as a free act, then the very idea of free action is one the human mind could not have conceived for itself. I quite admit that, knowing in your experience what it is to sin, you may sometimes through scrupulousness give a wrong label to this or that action, and suppose it to be a sin when it was really only a mistake. But you couldn't even wrongly suppose it to be a sin if there weren't such an experience as sin, or if that experience had not been felt by the human race. I can mistake Mrs. Brown, whom I know, for Mrs. Smith, whom I know, but I can't mistake her for Mrs. Jones, whom I don't know—even a wrong judgement must somewhere have a basis in reality. If you break your hostess's best sugar-basin by some quite unavoidable accident, you have a feeling at the time that is very much like the remorse you feel after committing a guilty action. That's a mistake. But you couldn't *mistake* your feeling for remorse unless you had learned, somehow, to attach a meaning to the word " remorse."

I don't mean to say that, when you have thus vindicated the freedom of the will, the problem of free will is an easy one, even in psychology. We say, " What motive induced you to be so cruel ? "—do we then imply that our motives, our estimates as to the good and the harm, apparent or real, that will result from our action, are tyrants that force us into doing what we do ? Why then, we are determinists once more : motives have swayed our action from first to last, and there is no room left to put anything of ourselves into it. Or do we mean that, having weighed up the motives for and against the suggested action, we then proceed to choose our course quite independently of them—that our actual *choice* is determined by nothing whatsoever ? Why then, the freedom of our actions is meaningless ; it is at the last moment a mere whim, a mere caprice, that is the explanation of our action. Neither of those two positions will do. Just as there is no explaining of the way in which subject and object interact upon one another in our knowledge, so there is no explaining of the way in which our will and the motives which inspire it interact upon one another when we choose between two courses of action. It is a mystery, and we must bow to it.

But this we can say, that any philosophical theory which tries to persuade us that what heredity, and environment, and education, and habit have made of us, *that* we are and always will be ; that there is no room left for the free

action of the human soul, no chance of retrieving the past and making good once more ; that, consequently, men cannot, just as animals cannot, be in the true sense rewarded or punished for their actions, but only bribed into repeating their good actions, or deterred from repeating their bad actions—such a philosophical theory, I say, is false to the whole of our moral experience, and inconsistent with the first principles of Christianity. It may be easy enough to accommodate it to the dark, fatalistic religions of the East, or to Western imitations of them ; but the religion which Jesus Christ founded appeals to Man as a free agent, responsible for the use he makes of his opportunities and for the choice of his eternal destiny. Even the lost souls in hell have this dignity, that they are where they are of their own choice.

III

THE FALL

THE Book of Genesis gives us a picture of Man at his first beginnings as a prince exiled from his heritage ; Science, dealing with the same period, gives us a picture of Man as a baby, first groping his way, then beginning to find himself, then growing and developing by gradual upward stages into the self-appointed dictator of a world that has bowed to his cunning. Let us understand that the issue here is not concerned with a mere question of historical fact. We do not expect science to deal with questions of historical fact. When the biologists started out to give us an account of our origins, we did not expect them to discover for us the remains of rudimentary legs in the serpent. When we sent the archæologists exploring, we did not expect them to return in triumph with a fossil apple, bearing unmistakeable marks of a bite on each side. If there were any contemporary records by which to assess the value of the story of Genesis, it would be to the historian, not to the sciences, that we should look for guidance. Nor are we

likely to quarrel with the man of science if he discovers, or if he conjectures, that the earliest human creatures of whom he is able to find any traces were degraded bushmen instead of half-heroic beings. It was Rousseau who believed in the "noble savage," the unspoilt child of nature from whom our civilisation has degenerated. Christianity did not expect Man, after the Fall, to be such a character as that. Whatever gifts Adam possessed in the time of his innocence that were superior to yours and mine, were forfeited, absolutely and finally, by the Fall; and it is no news to us that our civilisation, where it is true to itself, has left Cain and Lamech behind.

In fact, our position is not that of people who suppose that the story of our race involves an early degeneration from a high to a low standard of morals or of culture. The failure of Christian doctrine to fall into line with the theories of the evolutionist lies deeper than that. This is where the quarrel lies. If the story of the Fall is true, then the human conscience—and since we are all sinners, the human consciousness of sin—must be present in Man from his very first beginnings. However much our moral standards may have changed in their particular application—as, for instance, in the setting of a higher value on human life—Man has always had the power to realise that he is sinning when he sins, and the knowledge that such conduct is contrary to the law of his Creator and the terms of his creation. But if

human history is to be brought into line with the whole history of animal life on our planet, then we should expect that the knowledge of God and the consciousness of sin developed gradually in Man's soul, just as certain capacities —the capacity, for instance, to stand upright on two legs—would be supposed to have developed gradually in his body. And, further, those keener moral perceptions ought somehow to have been developed by him in the course of his struggle for existence, in answer to the needs of his surroundings, or as the title by which the race continues to persist in a world where the weakest goes to the wall.

Now, supposing that Divine revelation had told us nothing at all about the dawn of human experience, and that we were left entirely to the guesses of the biologist for information about our earliest past, what sort of theory should we construct for ourselves ? Something, I suppose, like this—that Man when he first won his right to survive knew no restriction upon his actions except such as mere instinct provided : he had no theory of controlling his desires, no sense of cruelty or of injustice ; that he lived as beasts live, the blameless child of unrestrained instinct. Gradually he found that his opportunities for gratifying his desires had outrun the limit within which he might safely indulge them. Disease followed, or if not disease, at least an enervated constitution ; or mere worldly caution taught him the first elements of orderly conduct :

> " Philosophers deduce you chastity
> Or shame, from just the fact that at the first
> Whoso embraced a woman in the field
> Threw club down, and forewent his brains beside,
> So, stood a ready victim in the reach
> Of any brother savage, club in hand ;
> Hence, saw the use of going out of sight
> In wood or cave to prosecute his loves."

—so Bishop Blougram read in his French book. Further, when instinct or common sense warned our forefathers that it was more conducive to the general happiness if they lived in tribes and in village settlements than if they lived isolated on the one-man-one-cave principle, it began to be seen that life in a community involved some give-and-take in matters of gentleness and of honesty. A rude compact that if you stopped stealing your neighbour's eggs he would stop clubbing you over the head would have in it the germs of what we call law and order. And gradually, as these advantages came to be more clearly seen, and even drawn up in some code of law : gradually, as the younger generation became accustomed to the idea of self-control and of observing your neighbour's rights—when all is said and done, you can do a great deal by beating a boy—there would grow up in some dim region of the human consciousness the sense that what medicine discouraged and what law forbade was not only insanitary, not only illegal, but positively wrong.

That is a very pretty picture : the chief disadvantages attaching to it are that it isn't true,

it doesn't explain what it set out to explain, and it is quite out of harmony with the whole of Christian morals.

It isn't true—that is to say, there is not a shred of evidence for it ; and our friends the anthropologists, who make it their business to throw what light they can upon the principles of primitive human society, have lately given up this attempt to explain away morals as taking their origin from mere worldly convenience. They will tell you on the contrary that some sort of religion or " magic " comes earlier in human society than the making of laws for purposes of practical convenience. The social contract is out of date.

And it doesn't explain what it set out to explain. The sense of distinction between good and evil, between right and wrong, is something totally different from the sense that such and such a thing is harmful, or that such and such a thing is contrary to the welfare of the community. Once again, I quite agree that if you have got the idea of right and wrong in your head, it is possible to have a false conscience, to mistake what is really indifferent for something wrong, and *vice versa*. But if you don't start with some general idea of right and wrong in your head it is impossible to see how it is ever going to get there. There may be precious little difference between the degraded savage who's got very little conscience and the beast that has got none at all. But the difference, such as it is, is definite and absolute.

And it's quite out of harmony with the whole of Christian morals. For it means that virtue —the observance of the distinction between right and wrong—is simply one of the weapons which have enabled the human race to survive : justice is simply a means to prevent the human race exterminating itself by quarrels, continence simply an expedient to save it from physical degeneration. If that were all virtue is, then we should have to say that the death of our Lord on Calvary had taken that code of morals and written across it in letters of blood, " *Cancelled.*" The law of biology is that he who loves his life shall save it : the law of Christ is that he who loves his life shall lose it. It is the deliberate doctrine of our Lord and Master that there is no survival of the fittest in the heavenly economy : that the unfittest to survive in this world is the fittest to survive through all eternity with God. There is no room for arguing over it : if natural morality is simply a sort of protective shell which the human race has formed round itself for its own preservation, then Christian morality, the morality of the Sermon on the Mount, is a diseased and pernicious growth, and ought to be cut away.

But after all, why should we expect the history of human morals to follow the lines laid down for it by the fancy of a few dogmatic evolutionists ? We have seen that the human intellect is not and cannot be an incident in the course of natural evolution, but is a sudden intrusion upon the natural order of things.

We have seen that mankind has again wandered aside from its proper evolutionary orbit by being found in possession of a will that is free to choose and responsible for its choice. If this be so, surely it is clear that the history of the human conscience will be altogether outside the course of ordinary biological happenings: that the human conscience, too, is not a gradual growth in us, but a sudden intrusion, part of a different order of Creation. True, we couldn't know that Man was created innocent and has fallen from his innocence. Philosophy wouldn't determine the point for us, though our whole experience of the moral struggle in ourselves, the conflict between the law of sin in our members and the law of grace, is such as befits the condition of beings that have fallen from what they once were. But philosophy does say to biological science, "Stand aside here." And while it stands aside, Divine Revelation steps in and shows us what we once were—were for an infinitesimal moment of history and shall never be again. God made Man right, and he hath entangled himself in an infinity of questions. What wonder that Man is a come-by-chance in the system of Creation, if the very earliest incident in his career is indeed the story of an arrested tendency, a Divine purpose thwarted?

IV

SIN

WHATEVER you believe or don't believe about it, one thing is certain about Sin, that it doesn't enter into the province of any of the natural sciences. But all this loosening of the direct faith our great-grandfathers had in the special Creation of Man, in his free will, in the story of his Fall, all this uneasy feeling which has got about, that the doctrines which are taught to us as children are only taught to us because a child can be made to believe anything, and are quite out of harmony with what thinking people are saying nowadays—all that has resulted, even among professing and practising Christians, in a sort of vagueness about religious dogma which is perilous to the most central and the most practical articles in our creed. We use the old language, but we shrink from enquiring too closely into the exact meaning of its terms, for fear of finding ourselves up against a controversy. In that way, subtly and unobtrusively, the directness of the Christian message is becoming endangered. Let us think quite straight. Knowing what we do of man's soul, man's free

will, man's fall from grace, what do we understand to be the central idea which the word "sin" ought to convey to a Christian? And what aspect of sin is it that all these modern people, the philanthropists, and the reformers, and the medical men, and the gentlemen who write science for the million in the Sunday papers, are all the time trying to leave out of sight?

Sin is voluntary violation of the law of God. What do we understand by a law? Law, says St. Thomas, is a certain ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by one who has charge of the commonwealth. That is the old and the literal sense of the word "law"; and it's easy to transfer that definition of ordinary human laws so as to apply to the eternal law of God. But remember, since we all took to talking science, law has another meaning for us as well. Commonly, we understand law to involve a command imposed on somebody by somebody else; but in matters of science we use it as meaning simply a statement—a statement of some principle which is always operative and which infallibly produces, in our experience, uniform results—Newton's laws in physics, Grimm's law in philology, Gresham's law in political economy, and so forth. A law, in this sense, is not what tells you to do something, but simply what assures you that something will happen. It does not need to be asserted by rewards and penalties; automatically it asserts itself.

Now, in speaking of human morals, it's very easy to get mixed up between these two senses of the word " law." If I say, for example, that the sinner is false to the law of his being, what do I mean ? Do I mean that he is disobeying a law, in the sense of a command, imposed upon him by the author of his being ? Or do I merely mean that, in behaving as he does, he is neglecting the scientific principles which will make for his health and happiness, and calling into play the scientific principles which will involve him in unhappiness, or in disease ? To us Christians, law is of two kinds, the natural and the positive. To us the laws of Nature, in so far as they affect human conduct at all, are part of the law of God, and have his sanction behind them. If the effect of drinking whisky all day long is to turn a man into a helpless, degenerate, degraded being, that is enough for us as proof that his excesses, since they entail such a consequence, are contrary to God's will. We do not need any express command given us by an angel to warn us against imitating such an example. The scientific " law " that excessive drinking has such and such effects on the system is evidence of a Divine law which forbids drunkenness. But we have also to reckon with the positive law of God—commands issued to us in the pages of Holy Scripture, or, in matters of detail, by the regulations of the Church. We know, for example, that it is wrong to receive Communion when not fasting. But Nature never

told us that. The scalpel and the microscope could never have brought to our notice such an obligation as that. Yet, because we believe that God's natural law and his positive law proceed from the same source—that is, from his infinite wisdom—we hold ourselves bound as much by the one as by the other.

For the malice of sin consists precisely in the aversion of the soul from God. You may commit a sin which primarily regards yourself ; as, for example, if you ruin your health by a career of intemperance, or take your own life in a fit of despair. You may commit a sin which primarily regards your fellow-men ; by robbing them, by defrauding them, by oppressing the widow and the stranger. Or you may commit a sin which concerns God alone, by blaspheming, for example, his holy Name or his Blessed Mother's. But in the first and second cases, just as much as in the third, the malice of your sin consists in your aversion from God—" To thee only have I sinned." In the first case, you have neglected the plain warnings of experience, you have defied nature, run counter to the principles of your constitution ; but that is not the point, the point is that you have broken the law of God. In the second case, you have brought undeserved misery on others, you have dissolved, as far as in you lay, the bonds of justice and of equity which hold human society together, you have forfeited your right to enjoy the protection of human laws ; but

that is not the point, the point is that you have broken the law of God. Turn which way you will, there is but one voice of command which is peremptory, which admits of no excuses. And whether that voice breathes from the happy soil of Paradise, or comes down in thunder from Sinai, or goes forth to Christendom from the City of the Seven Hills, it is the same voice, the voice of God.

I don't think you will be disposed to disagree with me if I say that modern public opinion—and by that I mean the atmosphere of our time in political, in literary, above all in journalistic circles—does not come anywhere near that point of view. It does not deny that point of view; I doubt if it has ever considered it seriously enough to give it a denial, but it does proceed on the silent assumption that sin is, in the first instance, not sin against God, but sin against the law of your own nature or against your fellow-men. It is a threadbare subject, but it seems inevitable to refer for an illustration to that set of problems which is being so much aired nowadays, I mean the problems of sex and of married life. In the ordinary divorce-court case, modern opinion will be prepared to agree that the co-respondent sinned, since he infringed another man's rights: it will, perhaps, be prepared to agree that the respondent sinned if she left her children as well as her husband—that was unnatural, they say, in a mother; that was sin. But if the petitioner secures a divorce and goes through the form of

a second marriage in flat defiance of the positive law of God—" Oh, I don't know, why shouldn't he ? You see, he was not to blame ; you can hardly expect a contract to be kept so one-sidedly." That is the root of all the trouble : God's law comes in only as an afterthought, and when God's law has no considerations of public interest or of natural decency to reinforce it, God's law is forgotten. Let a man drink himself into delirium tremens, and we shall all agree he is a bad man. Let a man commit murder, and we shall all admit he is a bad citizen, and the priests whose undue influence has been criticised for a century past will suddenly be asked why they didn't stop him. But if a man cares, without doing himself or others an injury, to indulge himself as he pleases, the doctor shrugs his shoulders, and the politician strokes his chin, and the journalist winks and passes by.

In all that, modern opinion is suffering from a threefold forgetfulness. And the three things it forgets are—Man's place in creation, Man's free will, Man's fall. It forgets (I will not say it denies) that however much our bodies are part of the natural order around us, our souls are, from the very beginning of our history, and in the life of every individual human being, a special creation, the breaking in of another world upon ours : that, consequently, Man is in a special position as a rational creature, and must not expect to have his sailing orders given him by mere instinct or by mere habit, as the

dumb brutes do : being rational, he is capable of receiving, is privileged to receive, is responsible for receiving attentively, a positive law enjoined on him by the expressed will of a personal Creator. God spoke to Moses as a man speaks face to face with his friend—that is the charter of humanity.

They forget, in the second place (for I will not say that they deny) that Man is a free agent. Their heads are so buzzing with statistics about how men in general will behave on an average in a given set of circumstances, as to be unable to realise that this individual man is here and now about to make himself responsible for an act freely chosen by his own will. In God's eyes, we are so many men ; in the statistician's eyes, we are so many guinea-pigs : that's half the trouble of all our modern talk about morals.

Our public opinion forgets, in the third place, that Man is a fallen creature. When the beast obeys the instincts that prompt it, however cruel, however rapacious, however incontinent its habits may seem to us, we know that it is only obeying the law of its own nature. But if it be true, as Christian theology asserts, that Man as he is now is not Man as he was meant to be at the time of his Creation, then it is obvious that he cannot plead, in defence of the morality of his actions, the fact that he behaved as it seemed natural to him to behave. For who shall tell us whether the instinct which prompted him was part of the healthy instinct of the human

animal, or part of the perverted instinct which belongs to a soul Satan has tempted from its first innocency? Only God's law can tell us that; often enough, only God's positive law can tell us that.

V

THE END OF MAN

You will remember, perhaps, the little girl in *Punch* who asks, " Mummy, what's that ? " " That, dear, that's a cow," and the little girl says, " Why ? "—a thoroughly philosophical question, and Aristotle might have been proud of it. Our minds cannot rest content with asking How ? we must go on to ask Why ? Suppose I were travelling and, on landing in some strange country, saw a man working his arms this way and that above his head ; and suppose I ask a bystander, Why does he do that ? " Oh, well," says the bystander, " the muscle of the arm is a most interesting anatomical affair, and illustrates very well the principles of leverage. Suppose, for example——" . . . " No, no," I interrupt, " I didn't ask *how* he did it, I wanted to know *why*." " The nerves," replies the bystander, " form a most fascinating subject of discussion ; their office is to telegraph, as it were, to all the limbs the orders of the organising brain. You would hardly believe——" . . . But by this time I have gone off in despair : I have been asking questions in teleology from a scientist.

Science doesn't know why, and has no right to care. But all this business of evolution has, since it passed into the hands of the philosophers, inspired them with the hope of finding out more about the meaning of the world, and the meaning of human existence in particular. For if we are assured that Nature presents to our view not a fixed set of types, but a set of types that differs from one age to another ; and if these types do not merely change backwards and forwards, but move onwards with a kind of progress, so that we can say of the elephant that it is not merely different from the mammoth but more highly developed than the mammoth, more highly organised than the mammoth, better suited than the mammoth to survive in this queue that struggles for existence, our minds cannot but form the idea of evolution from the lower to the higher, evolution which is progress, not merely process. I am afraid that so far as the little girl's question is concerned, we don't know, and never shall know in this world, why the thing should be a cow. We feel sure that behind all the marvellous order in which creation develops there is, somewhere, a purpose ; but what it is we can't even guess. Except in one single department ; there we not only can but must guess : so long as we are men and not vegetables we cannot stop guessing about it. As a great Catholic poet has told us, " the proper study of mankind is man " ; and when the question is raised, " Why is Man here ; why has he developed as

he has developed ; what is he developing and what ought he to be developing into ? " then the guessing competition does become fast and furious, and we aren't going to be kept out of it. For man desires knowledge not merely for the sake of knowledge ; he desires to know how to shape his life ; his right or his wrong development is an issue which is practical to him, for it is his business to make or to mar the decision of it.

If you take it for granted, as most modern thinkers do, that man has evolved, is evolving, and has got to evolve, not merely from something into something else, but from something less perfect into something more perfect, then there are three ways of going about your investigation. You may go to biological science, and ask how and by what weapons man developed (if he did develop) from the brute. Or you may go to history, and try (it's a very thorny process, but you can try) to read impartially in that record the story of man's development in the last (shall we say ?) three thousand years, with a few guesses about a period still further back ; and you may then take it for granted that the way man has gone is the way he ought to be going, and the sooner he gets on with it the better. Or (and this is far the commonest method of the three) you may take your own pet theory about what man ought to be like, and you may sit down and wrestle with history until you succeed in convincing yourself that man has, all the time, been becoming

more and more like that, whatever facts seem to point to the contrary—more moral, or more socialistic, or more vegetarian, or whatever you will. And then you publish that in serial form on all the railway bookstalls and label it "History."

And what are the results of those three processes? If you stick to the first method, and try to prove that the development of the human race is in a strict line with the principles which govern, and the instincts which inspire, the struggle for existence in the brute creation, the upshot of your meditations will certainly not be encouraging to morality. You may, if you will, think of the ideal man as a perfect physical type, strong, patient, highly endowed with all the pagan virtues—and yet, even so, you are false to biological theory: for cunning, not brute strength, is Man's weapon; and your ideal man, if you think of man as an individual, will be the crafty, unscrupulous, selfish, cringing, bullying creature that was long ago exposed, in all his nakedness, in the first book of Plato's Republic. Or, if you prefer to think of man as essentially gregarious, hunting not alone but by the pack, you must still admit that the strongest nation, by however foul means it may have gained its ascendancy over the rest of mankind, is the dominant and therefore the highest type: and if anyone is proposing to revive that doctrine after all Europe has bled for four years in disproof of it, he is welcome to his opinion, but he is not likely to make

converts. It is a silly mistake to talk as if, the doctrine of the Fall once discarded, it would be easy to bring human progress into line with biological evolution. As Huxley pointed out long ago, you cannot bring human progress into line with strict biological evolution unless you are prepared to throw over moral standards and moral judgements altogether.

If, on the other hand, you take human history as far as we can trace its records, and try to read it as an impartial document, you will find development in it, I admit, process in it, I admit ; but whether it be in any true sense progress I see no ground for determining. You can say with some certainty that the spread of civilisation has made the human animal into a more complicated being, with his sensibility increased in a thousand ways (music and the arts alone will bear witness to that) and his nerve fibre correspondingly less tough ; a higher price set upon human life, a more resolute determination to eliminate physical pain ; less importance attached to the group, more to the individual ; and there is, of course, much more to be said. But whether we approve or disapprove of such symptoms depends entirely on our own ethical standards, and those ethical standards we do not read in the record, but bring them with us, ready formed, to the discussion. Civilisation has spread ; so do the mumps. A civilised man is more highly developed than a savage ; so is pneumonia more highly developed than a cold on the chest. I

am not decrying civilisation ; I am merely saying that so far as we admire it, we admire it not simply because it has developed, but because it has developed on lines which seem to us good ones—we are using a standard of our own to judge it by.

But the moment you allow people to read history in the light of their own prejudices, you must despair of finding any agreement of opinion as to what is higher and what is lower in the scale of development. One believes that our international politics are tending towards world-peace and world-brotherhood ; another sees a progressive and a salutary growth of the sense of separate nationality going on all around us. One holds that our psychic gifts are the latest flower of our civilisation, and through them lies the gateway to all further human advancement ; another (one of the greatest of contemporary Oxford philosophers) will tell you that these psychic gifts are a mere survival of the beast in us, and that the ordinary horse or dog is far more sensitive to uncanny spiritualistic impressions than is the ordinary man. And as to the very widespread neglect of organised religion in our day, you will find some writers who regard it as merely the backwash of an intellectual movement, others who hail it as the beginning of a purer, more spiritual conception of religion ; others, again, who take it as evidence that the whole Christian superstition is tottering to its downfall. It's odd, isn't it, that we all agree in proclaiming that

man evolves, yet no two of us can agree how, or since when, or into what ?

It's odd, and it's worse than odd, it's tragic. For the world is full of young men who go about wanting to evolve as they ought to evolve (though why they shouldn't let the world evolve without them, if they think it gets better every day, is sometimes a puzzle to me) and to them it is a life-and-death question, " Where is all this progress of the human species leading to ? " And when, wearied of debate, and baffled by a thousand unanswered questions, they cease to worry about the remote future, and determine to let civilisation go its own way and save itself or damn itself as it pleases, what is left to them ?

There is left to them one movement still which remains untried, a movement so purposeful that it is easily mistaken for a conspiracy, yet so sure of itself that it needs no programme and no platform, begs no support from the presumed approval of a shadowy posterity. Such is the Catholic Church, which has no theories as to whether mankind is moving, and if so in what direction ; nor, if it were assured that there were any such tendency, would swerve aside for one moment from its appointed path. For the message which the Church of God preserves is a message not to the human race in the aggregate, but to each solitary, individual soul. Its hero, God's hero, the character in the world's drama which holds the Angels breathless with expectation, is not mankind but Man—this man or that man, you and I,

with our hopes and ambitions, our difficulties and strivings, our falls and recoveries. " Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is all man " ; the human race exists to make heaven populous, and that end has to be achieved by us singly, in the dreadful loneliness of our dual destiny. Whether Christendom is marching forward to fresh world-conquests, or whether the Son of Man, when he comes, is to find but little faith on the earth, the end of Man will be achieved—is daily being achieved, according to the plan of his creation. The end of Man is realised whenever the gates of heaven open once more, and one more pardoned soul struggles to the feet of its Creator.

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